



ATARI BAY AREA COMPUTER USERS SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

THE ATARI COMPUTER SHOW: On June 19, 20, Atari and the Bay Area user groups will present another computer blow out. ATARI is buying radio spots and newspaper advertising to assure that this time everyone around knows what is happening. We will have a classroom with 15 STs to show new and prospective owners how to get around the GEM desktop, and how to use graphics, word processors, and spreadsheets. Although business applications will be a main focus there will be games, graphics, MIDI music, and programming for both STs and XL/XEs to keep hobbyists and hackers happy. Our members are needed to help set up (on Thurs. 7/18 from 12:00PM to 6:00) to staff the classroom and the ABACUS booth, to help vendors staff their booths, take tickets, etc. Although, discount tickets will be available at the June 6 meeting, WORKERS GET IN FREE, and the club shares in the receipts. Please volunteer! Call me at 753-8483 or Warren Lorente at 453-3665 (San Rafael).

NEXT MEETING: Y'all come to the June 6, ABACUS meeting at the 19th Ave. Diner (see box). See a preview of the projection video system which should work for both 8 bit and ST systems. "Should" is the operative word in that sentence since we have not yet tested it. 8 Bitters will meet at 10:00. STers will join us at Noon for an hour of news, gossip, a video demo, and business of common interest. Straight ST stuff will run from 1:00 to 3:00.

NEW MEMBER: At the May meeting, Stan Kelly-Bootle joined ABACUS. As one who has frequently enjoyed a moment of relief from the keyboard by pulling down a dog-eared copy of *The Devil's DP Dictionary*, it was a pleasure to think that we might have some real humor to look forward to in the newsletter. Stan is now working in Mill Valley on (among other things) a micro-oriented successor to the Devils Dictionary. The original tome has some arcane references available only to the addled minds of mainframe victims. But many are a delight to all. For example, bottom-up is defined as:

Relating to a programming methodology in which the finer details are coded before any study of the overall needs of the system has been made.

He goes on:

The ideal Bottom-up (project) co-ordinator should be a top-downer at heart, able to dive in before any of the team have surfaced, meet them at three fathoms or less, and gain control of their oxygen control valves.

Under P we find:

Paper low n. A lamp which lights to indicate that your output is now appearing on the platen.

I remembered this gem yesterday when browsing in a Computerland store. They had a NEC P6, 24 pin printer for which I have been lusting recently. (Jimmy Carter doesn't have all the fun.) I wanted to see a sample of the type, but alas, the machine had no paper and was not even connected to a computer. I feared an avalanche of salesmanship if I asked to see a sample. But could it be that in a moment of negligence the salesman had let the paper-low light out of his sight permitting a few characters to wed themselves to the rubber platen? I hunkered down, moving my head off to the left to get an angled glance of what at best, would be black on black, and there it was--a perfectly clear impression of razor sharp, 10cpi, full letter quality type circling the platen. I can now unhesitatingly recommend the machine.

NEWS NOTES: Member Larry Wong chanced upon a

A New Home for ABACUS: The 19th Avenue Diner
1201 19th Ave. (at Lincoln by Golden Gate Park) 2nd Floor. Beginning JUNE 6, All meetings (8 bit and ST) will be on the first Sat. of the month. The schedule will be:

8 Bit at 10:00AM to 1:00PM; ST at 12:00 to 3:00 PM

Noon to 1:00 will be used for activities of interest to both groups, special guests, business meeting, etc. Peter Garin, General Manager of the Diner has been a great help. We will use their new 10"x10" projection video system and telecommunications wiring (for BBS demos). So, buy your lunch at the Diner (great sandwiches-though not cheap) and DO NOT PARK IN THEIR SMALL LOT.

closeout of DBMAN (the ATARI nonGEM version) and bought all they had for \$54 each (incl tax) for our benefit. He has three left. If interested call him at 587-2627 (SF). That is a good price. I bought one.

New ABACUS member, Thuan Bul, needs some advice on a good assembler for the ST. If you can help him please call him at 387-1303 (S.F.)

---Bill Zinn



THE WORLD OF ATARI

A Computer Show

Co-sponsored by ATARI Corp. and the Bay Area Atari User Groups

Friday June 19, and Saturday June 20,
10:00AM to 6:00 PM
at the Santa Clara Convention Center

Admission: \$5.00 (Children 12 and under
free when accompanied by a parent)

(See your User Group for member discount tickets)

FREE: Hands on training for novices; Lectures and seminars by superstars in the ATARI industry; Music celebrities; an exciting game tournament with a CASIO Synthesizer to the winner; Demonstrations of the latest in:

Desktop publishing Business Applications Education
Computer interfaced Music Graphics Home Applications

For Information Call:
ABACUS: (415) 753-8483
or
ATARI: (408) 745-2012



ATARI Bay Area Computer Users Society P.O. Box 22212 San Francisco CA 94112

NEWS LETTER CONSTRUCTION SET

by Charles Cherry

First of all I'd like to point out that this is an entirely home-grown newsletter issue. Everything in it was contributed by ABACUS members. Darryl May's review of the 12th WEST COAST COMPUTER FAIRE may seem a little late, but Darryl saw a lot more there than most people did and some of the stuff he reports on is just becoming available. And, you can use his article as a shopping guide for the WORLD OF ATARI SHOW coming up this month (see box on cover).

The 130XE upgrades were successful. With the help of Frank Morales and George Foranek, we debugged them and I'm happy to report 8 new 320XEs in the club. The 800XL upgrade has proven to be more difficult. If anyone has done the modified Claus Buchholz upgrade, give me a call (333-9519); we need help.

BARGAIN OF THE MONTH

THE PRICE CLUB has just opened a store in South San Francisco. It is a good place to save money on all kinds of things. The only stuff that relates directly to computers is the 2500 sheet box of 20# laser cut bond printer paper at \$13.49. I just paid \$35 for a box someplace else. They also have labels at \$10.49 for 5000.

THE PRICE CLUB also has tools, furniture, garden supplies, groceries, etc. Selection is limited, usually only 1 brand of each item, and you have to buy large quantities. Not everything is a great buy, but all are good and some are spectacular. The money you save here you can spend on software someplace else.

A membership card for THE PRICE CLUB costs \$25 a year. Unless you are in the habit of buying Worcestershire sauce by the gallon (\$3.09), you might be better off knowing someone who owns one than owning one yourself; much like a swimming pool.

CLASSIFIED SECTION

Curt Fisher is selling off an entire computer lab. He has 400s, 800s, 800XLs, 1050s, and an EPROM burner. 459-5669

FOR SALE: NEC JB1201-M 12" green screen monochrome monitor, \$100 or best offer. Axiom AT-846 printer interface, \$60 or best offer. Pat 563-0827

Herb's Discount Software on Paradise Rd in Fremont has 8-bit and ST software at good prices. He can also be found at many local shows.

Chuck Somers in Hayward does 1050 disk drive repairs. 581-5516

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Get your submissions for the next issue to the editors by June 26, 1987.

The West Coast Computer Faire

By Darryl May

Atari didn't have its own booth at the 12th West Coast Computer Faire, but several reps were at the Atari users group booths. Three local users groups (ABACUS, COAST, SLCC) and ACENET from southern California had booths. No MEGA ST, ATARI PC, or laser printer was displayed. An interesting fact: There were 40 Atari STs, 16 Amigas, and over 1000 IBM compatibles being displayed at the show. APPLE didn't even have the guts to show up. I did see the Mac SE and Mac II there for a few hours at a APPLE dealership. IBM was there showing old machines and other boring stuff. The best thing about IBM's booth was that they had real soft carpet to rest on.

Data Pacific was showing the Magic Sac and Navarone was showing their video digitizer at the SLCC booth. Computer Eyes video digitizer was being heavily used at the ABACUS booth. PC AI, a magazine about artificial intelligence, is trying to support ATARI computers but they have not found many applications for the ATARI. Employees of Supra could be seen wandering around the show but I did not see any of their products. Hybird Arts was in the ACENET booth showing their MIDI software and a great multi-player maze game. A more detailed account about the major highlights of the faire follows.

8-BIT/ST COMPANIES

Antic was there showing those stereo 3-D glasses (should be available in 4 to 6 weeks) and the rest of their catalog, including a very interesting program called "Graphic Shop" for the 8-bit. News about "Bulletin Board Construction Set" there is no hope for the 1030/XH301 and MPP versions. The HAYES version will work sometimes with a limited system set up but still is not very stable. A program called "GIST" for the 16-bit looks real good. GIST allows you to create and edit sounds graphically then use that sound in your C language program. A new magazine dealing with remote control cars, planes, etc, is being put together by ANTIC.

ICD was in the ABACUS and SLCC booths showing off their multi-function add-on card, printer interfaces, and a 5Mb hard disk unit. I am proud to have a company like ICD still believing that the 8-bit computer is worth supporting. Please contact them directly for more information about their products at 1220 Rock Street, Suite 310, Rockford, IL 61101; (815) 229-2999.

KEYPUNCH Software had about 5 different diskettes of 8-bit programs for sale for under \$10. Each disk includes 4 programs. Also several programs for the ST are planned. So if you're looking for a publisher for your program and your are having some bad luck, give them a call. They can be reached at 1221 Pioneer Bldg, St. Paul, MN 55101; (612) 292-1490.

Continued on page 3.

The West Coast Computer Faire
 (continued from page 2)

Steele Publishing makes at least 100 different graphic icons for Print Shop and Print Master. Thankfully they are now serious planning ATARI versions. They can be contacted at P.O. Box 5493, Concord, CA 94524; (415) 685-7265.

A new hard disk drive system for the 8-bit and 16-bit computers was shown at the ACENET booth. There were versions for the XE, XL, and ST computers. The 8-bit and 16-bit interface is only \$475. If you have a 8-bit computer, you can select a 10, 12, 26, 40, or 46 Mb complete system. The 16-bit selection is 26Mb or 46Mb complete system. The top price for the 8-bit system is \$1025 and the top price for the 16-bit system is \$900. The BTL hard disk is available from Lurie Associates; P.O. Box 7546, Van Nuys, CA 91409; (818) 780-1723.

The Nigent Pocket Modem was shown. It is a Hayes compatible 300/1200 baud modem. This modem is different from the rest because it is very small and it can be run off a regular 9 volt battery. It is small enough to fit in one's shirt pocket. The modem is available for \$259 from Nigent Inc; 865 Tahoe Blvd, Incline Village, NV; (702) 832-3725.

A new device called "PC Viewer" is a LCD plate. It will allow you to display a composite computer screen on your overhead projectors. The price is in the \$1200 range! Of course the the final output on your overhead projector will not be in color, the image comes out in a light shade of blue/purple. VIVID System Inc is the company making this product and they can be reached at 41752 Christy St; Fremont, CA 94538; (415) 656-9965 or (800) 331-2834.

ST ONLY COMPANIES

A company called XEBEC is coming out with a 20Mb and 10Mb hard disks for the ST series in 6 weeks. A total of 8 hard disks can be daisy chained together for added storage. The 20Mb model should go for less than \$700. The 10Mb model should go for less than \$500. The interface cable should for about \$10. XEBEC can be reached at 3579 Highway 50 East, Carson City, NV 89701; (800) 982-3232 or (702) 883-4000.

Med-Soft was displaying the "Touch Screen" system for the ST at the ABACUS booth. The touch screen system is a highly modified ATARI color monitor and a special programing language. To set up the system, you draw the screen using NeoChrome, then you define the areas that you want to be sensitive and what to do once that area is touched. MED-SOFT can be reached at 1411 9th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94122; (415) 664-2224.

A multi-track recording studio and full-featured MIDI sequencer called "MIDISOFT Studio" was shown at the Passport

Designs booth. The controls of this program are almost all done with the mouse. With a 1 meg machine you can have over 80,000 notes in memory. For more information please contact Passport Designs Inc at 625 Miramontes Street, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019; (415) 726-0280.

Door Openers, Inc. was showing "Your Personal Poet" at the ABACUS booth. This program will let you create a semi-original poem for you and print it out. The best feature of this program is that the price is \$9.95. The company can be reached at 775 East Greg St, Sparks, NV 89431; (702) 359-8200.

Want to learn craps? Well with a program called "Professor Craps" you can. This is a serious gambling program with no fancy graphics or amazing sounds. This program gets down to the main point quickly. If you want to seriously learn or play craps then this is the program for you. "Professor Craps" is available for \$49.95 from Scorpio System International; P.O. Box 2008, San Francisco, CA 94126; 1-800-443-0100 Operator #415.

Spectrum Holobyte, Inc. had a nice big booth showing two programs for the Atari ST (GATO, Fleet Street Publisher). GATO is a highly detailed submarine simulation. "Fleet Street Publisher" is that great desktop publishing program you have been hearing about from England. This looks like the state of the art desktop publishing package. I heard many positive comments about this program from ABACUS members. In my brief encounters with this program I found it to be easy to use and a lot more elegant than "Publishing Partner". The price for "Fleet Street Publisher" is \$149. Coming soon for the ST is Orbitor (a space shuttle simulator) and F-16 (a F-16 flight simulator); they are both a couple of months away. Spectrum Holobyte can be reached at 1050 Walnut, Suite 325, Boulder, CO 80302; (303) 443-0191. Spectrum Holobyte will be officially moving to California (Alameda to be exact) in June 1987.

WordPerfect Corp was showing a canned demo of what "WordPerfect" version 4.1 will be like. They will be testing the waters with this program sometime in June of 1987 and the price might be under \$200(?) So, if this program sells well, then they will continue supporting the ST. The major features of this program are total file compatibility with the IBM and other computer versions of 4.1, footnotes and endnotes, GEM interface, macros, simple math, merging, sorting, 115,000 word dictionary, table of contents and index generator, one to five columns and built in thesaurus. It is rumored that it will need a hard disk drive to run. If you are a professional writer or just a power user, this is the word processor to get. WordPerfect can be reached at 288 N. Center Street, Orem, UTAH 84057; (801) 225-5000.

ABACUS ST

Well, things have been pretty slow in the ST camp for the last couple of months. No Mega's, no laser printer, and not much new software. The next couple of months should be a lot more interesting, though, as some of the the promised new software should finally hit the shelves, and mabe Atari might even get some of their hardware out the door. And with the Atari Fairre coming up on June 19 & 20, we hopefully will get a chance to see some of the new products.

RR

RANDOM THOUGHTS

BY ROB RE

ANOTHER MAJOR LABEL JUMPS ON BOARD -- Manhattan Graphics is going to release a version of the popular Mac program, Ready-Set-Go, for the ST. For those not familiar with the program, it is one of the top selling desktop publishing packages for the Mac. The ST version is scheduled for July release (that means next year if typical ST software release schedules are followed) at a price of \$395. It should be interesting to see how the program compares to the currently available, and much less expensive, Publishing Partner and Fleet Street packages. If nothing else, the announcement demonstrates that the ST is gaining more respect in the field of desktop publishing. Now if they can only get the Mega's and the laser print out...

YET ANOTHER DATABASE ARRIVES -- One of the areas most lacking in the ST software catalog, is an easy to use powerful relational database. Well, Progressive Peripherals & Software Inc. has just released its Superbase Personal for the ST. This GEM based database from England can index any field with up to 999 indexes, store graphic images, print four across labels, handle up to 16,000,000 records per file, includes data validation features for data entry and three levels of passwords, and calculates formula fields. The database is available now for \$149. A more powerful Superbase Professional is also being developed which will handle form letter production and a high level database programming language similar to Basic. The specs look good, but I have not had a chance to play with it, so I advise that you try it out before purchasing it.

TRIP SPEAKS OUT AGAIN -- Trip Hawkins, president of Electronic Arts and number one Amiga fan of the world, recently confirmed that Jeremy San, author of Starglider, has been contracted by EA to create some new entertainment software. Trip stated, "Starglider, I think, is probably the only really outstanding game for the ST." Let me see if my I can remember some of my logic class from college. Starglider is the only really outstanding game for the ST. EA sells games for the ST. Therefore, none of EA games for the ST are really outstanding. Gee, Trip has just confirmed what we all have been saying. Why don't they do something about

it and come out with MARBLE MADNESS?

IT IS MAY, AND YES WE HAVE NO NEW ATARI'S -- No laser printer, no Mega ST's, no modem, and not even a blitter chip to be seen! Well, the latest unconfirmed rumor is that we should not hold our breaths. One rumor floating around is that the blitter chip is in trouble, and that Atari may even have to release the Mega's without it. It kind of looks like those folks were a little over optimistic again when they announced the machines back in January.

GOLDRUNNER FINALLY HERE? -- Do you all remember Goldrunner, that fabulous graphics game that MichTron has been advertising for the last couple of years. Well, I think it is out. I bought a copy, only the program comes from England on the Microdeal label. The warranty card and catalog in the box are from MichTron, so I assume that it is the same game they have been advertising. It is a fast scrolling shoot 'em up game a la Atari's Xevius. (If I spelled that wrong, I am sorry, but Thunder does not have the word in its dictionary.) The game is fast and graphics very smooth and detailed, and it comes complete with music and a digitized voice. Unfortunately, my copy locks up about every 30 seconds. It may be the fault of the early level keyboard on my ST, though, since I have not heard of others having the problem. If you like such shoot 'em up games, you might want to take a look at Goldrunner.

PIRATES SINK BATTERIES INCLUDED -- According to Marty Herzog, formerly of BI before the company went out of business, piracy plagued the company in its final days. He estimated that two thirds of their user base pirated software. What is the result of pirating? Well for one we lost a very pro ST software company (sure Electronic Arts bought out the line, but I would not call EA a pro ST company.) Think about that next time somebody asks you for a copy of a program.

ATARI HAS ITS OWN SHOW -- While there was a desktop publishing show going on at Moscone center a week or so ago, Atari was having its own show. Dealers were invited down to Atari for a meeting with representatives of Migraph, Fleet Street, and SoftLogic. I guess this is just another one of Jack's ways of saving money.

MULTISINC MONITOR

If you are interested in getting a multisinc monitor for your ST so that you can run both color and monochrome graphics on the same monitor, or if you just want to get more information on it, contact Dean Brunette at 588-0437 or get in touch with him at one of the ST sig meetings. He has been looking into the various monitors and wants to see how much interest there is with the club members.

Magic Sac 4.2

review by Eric Clausen

Data Pacific, Inc.
 409 East Speer Blvd.
 Denver, Colorado 80203-4240
 303-733-8158

Magic Sac + \$149 suggested retail

Magic Sac 1 \$100 suggested retail

What is it?

I can't believe that there are any ST owners out there who haven't heard of this product. For those few of you out there who have so far managed to remain ignorant of "the new, the hot, the happening, the now" products for their machines, I will offer a brief description. The 'Magic Sac' is a Macintosh emulating cartridge from Data Pacific, usually sold without the required 64k Apple ROMs. In combination with the emulation software and the additional utilities, it transforms the ST into a Macintosh (nearly). The Apple ROMs are generally available for \$50 or less. The Magic Sac is currently sold in two configurations. The basic Magic Sac 1 is available discounted for around \$90, the Magic Sac + is also discounted at around \$125. The extra \$35 buys you a system clock on your board and a cable to transfer software from a Macintosh to an ST. For \$140 - \$175 an ST owner can now explore the formerly foreign territory of Macintosh software.

Is it worth it? That's a question that has to be answered on an individual basis, depending on the application(s) you require. While many fine products are now appearing on the ST, the Mac market is far more mature. You may very well find that certain programs are only available on the Mac or have a better implementation on the Mac. You may just want to explore the Macintosh interface and get a feel for why all *those* people pay all that money for one of *those* machines. Certainly don't bother with the Magic Sac if your primary interests are games or music. Mac games seem pretty lifeless compared to most ST games and the Magic Sac does not support sound at this time (and probably never will). One of the great immediate advantages of the Magic Sac is the availability of the Mac equivalent of GDOs, something we have all been ever so patiently waiting for from Atari. For example, with MacWrite, you have access to hundreds of

fonts in different sizes and typesets. So there!

David Small's Magic Sac is a truly impressive technical achievement. It opens up new worlds of software to the ST owner at a very reasonable price. While this impressive feat of emulation does many things well, it is certainly not a substitute for the real thing. It has its weaknesses, and sometimes these weak areas can be more than slightly annoying. However, as an owner, I feel that this is a well supported product and a rapidly evolving product. Given time, the 'Sac' may closely approach the performance and speed of actual Apple hardware.

System Requirements

While it is possible to run applications on an unexpanded 520 ST *color* system with one single sided drive, I challenge the bravest among you to attempt this without recourse to violence or Valium. To approach this product seriously, get a monochrome monitor. Even though Magic Sac Rev. 4.2 supports color, this mode is really nothing more than a curiosity. Severe eyestrain is a certain outcome should you fail to heed this warning! As a reasonable minimum, a 1 meg machine with *at least* one double sided drive is what you should be using. A hard drive would be highly desirable in the future, as Rev. 5 will support it. Hard drive support will be crucial in cutting down the abysmally slow floppy I/O of the current system (more on this happy topic in a minute). Access to GENIE or CompuServe will help...

Where's the software?

This can be a bit of a problem, initially. At present you cannot stroll out to an Apple dealer,

buy a Mac disk and stuff it into your ST drive. You will be able to do this in the near future, however. Currently the Magic Sac requires that the Mac software you intend to run be in a special disk format. A special formatting utility is furnished to create these disks. You then port software directly from a Mac to the ST. You cannot port copy protected programs. Data Pacific has announced an interface box to plug inline between the ST drives and the ST which will allow the ST to directly read Macintosh disks, including protected ones! This eliminates tedious disk porting (at about 12 minutes porting time per 400k disk) and costly online charges for downloading. At the West Coast Computer Fair, David Small said it would be available "soon" and would "be less than \$200".

When I bought my Magic Sac at the San Jose Atarifest during the late summer of 1986, there was no software - period. Unless, of course, you walked 10 feet from the Data Pacific booth to where Alex Leavens was selling 4 disks of public domain software from BMUG (Berkeley Mac Users Group) for, hold on to your seat, \$50. Thanks, I think. Oh well, I suppose capitalist resourcefulness like this got Alex his job at Atari. Excuse me if I wander.

Anyway, if you don't have access to a Mac, ask another Magic Sac owner if he can furnish you a copy of an Apple startup (boot) disk. Many user groups now have or now are starting libraries of Magic Sac disks. If you have a 512k ST try to get a copy of Mac Finder 1.1, if you have more memory get a copy of 4.1. Magic Sac Rev 4.2 also supports Finder 5.3, but use this at your own risk! Finder 4.1 is the least buggy and remains the Finder of choice, according to the latest documentation. If you can get your hands on an Apple Finder and a public domain terminal program (TermWorks 1.29 or Freeterm 1.8), your life is easy. Simply get online to the Mac SIGs on GENIE and/or CompuServe and download a few thousand great public domain programs.

The Atari SIGs on these online services also serve as a clearinghouse of software and information, for users by users, on the latest bug reports, updates, software compatibility, questions, etc. Data Pacific also monitors the Magic Sac areas on these major services and will respond to user questions and problems. Most major cities are also home to dozens of Macintosh BBS's. If you can't find an Apple BBS, go down to your nearest Apple dealer and ask them where the the user groups are. The Apple users can tell you the numbers of local BBS's and some of them individually may help you - even if you do own one of *those ST things*.

Software Compatibility

An ongoing problem with the Magic Sac is that the emulation isn't perfect. The latest revision of the software has corrected several of the earlier reported bugs and overall compatibility has increased. I think that Data Pacific's estimate of 70 - 80% compatibility to be slightly overstated. Perhaps 50 - 60% at this time would be more accurate. If this doesn't sound like much, consider that even 50% of several thousand software packages is still a considerable amount of software.

Special attention has been paid to the major Macintosh packages. Microsoft Word, Excel, Ready Set Go, and several other big name packages are reported to run (unprotected versions). MacWrite 2.2 and MacPaint 1.5 run very nicely and are very easy to find as Apple gave these programs away with every Mac it sold. MacWrite 4.5 does not run and never will due to the fact that the programmers ignored Apple guidelines. Software calls to Mac specific hardware are bad news. MacWrite 4.5 also will not run on the new Macintosh SE, for the same reason. A new version of MacWrite is being produced for the new Apple machines and it is expected that it will also be Magic Sac compatible. Unfortunately, a great many PD text files are in MacWrite 4.5 format and MacWrite 2.2 will not read them. There are several PD and commercial utilities which will read and/or convert these files (Quickreader and Microsoft Works, for example).

Generally, if the developers followed the rules, compatibility is good. In cases of protected software, utilities to remove protection are available. Before actually paying for an expensive piece of Mac software, contact Data Pacific and ask them if it will run. Again, access to an online utility for questions of this nature will benefit you. Programs for the Mac which access the sound chip will crash unless you first access the control panel and turn the sound slider to zero (example: Billiards). If you save your Finder disk in this configuration you may save yourself a few headaches.

Printer Compatibility

The Macintosh is set up to support the serial Apple Imagewriter printer. Since few ST owners have these lying around the house, this has been a source of frustration. If you have an Epson or compatible printer, there are three simple solutions to this problem. Get yourself a copy of a Mac program called EPSTART. This can be found on numerous boards, although I'm not sure if this method of distribution is strictly legal. EPSTART will

modify the resident Imagewriter driver in the Finder system folder to generate Epson FX codes and send them through the parallel port. This program has worked fantastically well for me and my Star Gemini S6-10. This entire document was printed on my S6-10, primarily in point 'Chicago', the Macintosh system font.

It seems that the new Magic Sac software 4.2 causes EPSTART to crash. It worked perfectly with all earlier versions I had tried. A suspicious person might think that since Data Pacific is now selling their own Epson drivers (\$45) for use with the Magic Sac, they may want EPSTART to crash. Of course I'm referring to a suspicious person, not myself. You can still obtain Ver 3.5 of the Magic Sac software from numerous BBS's and run EPSTART and then use the modified Finder under Rev 4.2. If you do this, be careful not to copy your System files from one disk to another under Rev 3.5. Numerous reports of damaged Finders have surfaced as a result of this.

The second way around this problem is as just mentioned - buy a driver from Data Pacific.

The third method is to log onto GENIE and download files #2090 and #2089 from the Atari S16. These files contain printer drivers for Epson FX, MX, JX, RX and LQ printers. The system file included contains a Mac desk accessory called 'CHOOSE PRINTER' which allows you to pick any of the above printers as the system printer. You will first need a copy of 'Packit 3' from the Mac S16. These files have been 'packed' using Packit 3 (similar to ARC on the ST).

I have found that EPSTART gives the best quality output, I would suggest it as a first choice.

Regardless of how you get your printouts, be prepared to wait. Since essentially all output is in the form of graphic dumps, it takes time.

One other thing, you can always buy an Imagewriter and run it from the ST serial port. Sure.

Disk I/O speed and Performance

For a machine as terminally disk bound as the Mac, one hopes for the best possible speed, for disk I/O. Unfortunately, the ST/Magic Sac is a bit slow in this department. In Bruce Websters column in the April 1987 BYTE, pg. 290, he lists some comparative times for disk I/O and processor speed between a Mac Plus and a 1040 ST.

One problem with this comparison is that a Mac Plus uses the newer 128k ROMs while the Magic Sac uses the older 64k ROMs. He justifies this comparison by saying, "Apple has been shipping only 128k ROM machines for quite a few months now; between those and the upgrades, 64k ROM machines are a dying breed". Whether or not they are a dying breed is irrelevant, he's comparing different operating systems. It should be noted that the Mac Plus (128k ROM) is substantially improved over the earlier versions of the Mac (64k ROM), in all aspects of performance. Remember, too, that the original Mac with 128k RAM, 400k drive and 64k ROM is what set the computer world on fire back in Jan. 1984. Now we would consider this configuration to be of minimal utility. In fact, the Magic Sac on a 1040 ST would likely be considered superior by many to the original Mac.

This discrepancy aside, his times for disk reads and writes on the ST/Magic Sac seem quite accurate based on my own timings. He reports that processor bound applications do have an edge on the ST. In a sieve test the ST averaged 140% faster, in matrix multiplication the ST averaged 118% faster and in a sort test the ST averaged 133% faster. Disk writes averaged 400% faster on the Mac, disk reads (sequential sectors) averaged 132% faster on the Mac and random reads averaged 259% faster on the Mac. With these differences, any gain in processor speed will be considerably offset by the slow disk I/O. This is precisely why hard disk support in Rev 5 will be a great benefit.

Disk I/O from 800k Magic Sac disks is even worse. Oh well. There is a way around this, but it requires a 1 meg machine to be practical. Obtain a copy of the Mac PD program 'RAMSTART' (1.3 or 2.0), and put it in the system folder of your Finder 4.1 disk. Click on RAMSTART once to darken it and select 'Set Startup' from the Finder menu, double click. Reboot the system and RAMSTART will automatically copy your system files to a ramdisk and will eject drive A. With a large enough ramdisk, you can also copy in applications. Now you have a system running as fast as any real Mac!

To be honest, I haven't had the opportunity to run any application simultaneously with a Mac and ST/Magic Sac side by side. The obvious generalizations however, are that any program heavily math dependent will show improved performance on the ST/Magic Sac. Any program heavily dependent on disk I/O will suffer on the ST/Magic Sac. My brother is a Mac Plus owner and his main criticism of the ST/Magic Sac was the overall slowness of the system due to slow disk I/O.

The new formatting utility for creating 400k and 800k Magic Sac disks formats slowly. A faster way to create Magic Sac format disks is to format one disk with the program provided and copy the blank using Procopy. It's much faster. The utility has been improved by 'GEMizing' it and allowing the user to format multiple disks without rerunning the program.

Performance can also include such things as screen readability. The Atari SM124 monitor is larger (640x400 vs 512x342) and many Mac programs can directly use this larger screen. This is not a trivial difference. Many programs simply look better on an ST and user fatigue is reduced.

Remember two things. You may wish to run some programs which exist *only* on the Macintosh and in order to access these programs at all, some speed loss on the ST/Magic Sac *may* be considered a reasonable trade off. The Magic Sac is *at least* \$1000 cheaper than a Macintosh and, again, some performance loss *may* be worth the price difference.

Improvements in Version 4.2

The Magic Sac was originally released with Version 1 emulator software. This was followed in fairly rapid order by versions 2, 3 and 3.5. Version 4.2 is the latest release. The greatest improvement in Ver 4.2 is the ability to use the double sided 800k disk format. Since many Mac applications require the presence of the system folder (at least 150k) *on the same disk*, 400k disks fill up very quickly. Imagine an ST which had only single sided drive and required TOS on every disk, I think you get the idea.

Data Pacific claims some improvement in disk I/O, primarily when using the disk copy utility which duplicates the special Magic Sac formatted disks. Disk performance with Mac programs is another story again. Quoting from the docs, "Beta testers report from zero to 100% speed gain on various different programs." In the real world you can expect closer to a 0% speed increase.

Numerous additional bugs have been fixed in MacWrite, thankfully.

The Notepad DR doesn't crash anymore. Font/DR Mover in DR mode is ok now. The clipboard and scrapbook work more reliably now, allowing incorporation of MacPaint graphics into MacWrite text e.g. :



Color mode is now available on 512k ST's, if you can stand it.

The numerical keypad is now correctly mapped.

Support for Finder 5.3, the latest Finder for the Mac Plus. HFS isn't currently supported, Finder 5.3 runs under MFS on the Magic Sac. Data Pacific continues to recommend Finder 4.1 with the Magic Sac due to a number of new bugs which have cropped up with 5.3.

Support for Switcher 5.0 and 5.0b1, a great program which allows you to instantly switch between applications concurrently in memory (requires 1 meg).

Elimination of the 'Motivator' mode. The motivator loaded the startup disk into a special ramdisk on bootup. The problem with this mode is that this ramdisk was always treated as drive A. If you made the mistake of putting another physical disk into drive A the contents of the motivator would overwrite drive A on shut down. The use of RAMSTART is a superior method.

Various (disabled) options have been added, to be activated in Rev 5, to support a laser printer, memory configurations up to 4 megs and a hard drive.

You should note that support of some of the upcoming features will REQUIRE the Magic Sac +. And Data Pacific is now offering upgrades from Magic Sac 1 cartridges to '+' cartridges for \$25.

Emulation of the Mac 128k ROMs has been hinted at but until very recently little hard information has been available. Instead of building a new Magic Sac board and requiring new ROMs, the additional code in the 128k ROMs will be approximated in software.

Problems with Rev 4.2

A couple of problems have been reported with the latest software release for the Magic Sac. The new software doesn't always recognize disk ejects or insertions easily. I frequently have to 'tell' the system about disk swaps by pressing F1 or F2, much more often than with previous versions. I have problems getting system shut downs to work properly. MacWrite still crashes after printing. As mentioned, EPSTART doesn't seem to work under 4.2. This isn't as much a problem as an annoyance, but why is the default printer port still the damn serial port? The vast majority of people using this product are using parallel printers. Certain new unspecified products from Microsoft crash as they test an area of memory unmapped by the Magic Sac. Anything involving Appletalk crashes. Double sided disks cannot yet be ported directly, you have to do 400k at a time. The font size is a bit off on the file names under the file icons, apparently a concession to Finder 5.3. The clock on the Magic Sac + board is not the most accurate, mine is a few minutes fast every week. Data Pacific doesn't feel that greater accuracy is required as the sole purpose of the clock is date & time stamping of files. This clock also functions as the system clock for the ST while running under TOS. I noticed something odd while transferring the files from 400k disks to 800k disks. I had a completely full disk (400k) and copied it to an empty 800k disk. The destination disk showed only 391k used and all of the files were there !!! This also happened with other disks. Should I be nervous or am I 'missing' something here? Hmmm. Various other bugs which have yet to be discovered, will undoubtedly crop up.

Useful Programs

Knowing that what's useful to me may be garbage to you makes this a bit tricky. However, I think that there are certain programs that everyone should have.

- 1) A Finder is REQUIRED. 4.1 for 1 meg systems, 1.1 for 512k systems.
- 2) EPSTART for printing with an Epson or compatible.
- 3) MacWrite 2.2 for obvious reasons. It's not the worlds greatest word processor, but it's functional. There are better word processors for the ST, but you don't get all the great fonts available for MacWrite.
- 4) MacPoint 1.5 again for obvious reasons. Same comments as for MacWrite.
- 5) Termworks 1.29 or Freeterm 1.8. Either of these will give you instant access to thousands of PD programs.
- 6) Packit 3 to uncompress all those great files you got with Termworks!
- 7) Amstart 1.3 or 2.0 to really crank up the speed of your system.
- 8) Switcher 5.0 to instantly switch between applications
- 9) Choose Printer DR if you can't get Epstart.
- 10) Quickreader so you can read MacWrite 4.5 and WORD files.
- 11) Anything else is gravy!

A Final Note

David Small has made an incredible contribution to the ST world, he is obviously a man of tremendous talent and patience. For the job he has done he should receive his fair share monetarily. This product, like any other, is subject to piracy. I for one would hate to see the potential of this product wasted because of lost revenue due to piracy. There are pirated Magic Sac boards around, with pirated Mac ROMs (EPROMS) inside. The price difference between the real thing and the rip-off is so trivial that you shouldn't even consider the rip-off word. If you pay for the product, you'll get a good product with good customer support.

As I mentioned earlier, this product is rapidly evolving. Data Pacific has been doing a great job of supporting their product, and they need feedback - both positive and negative - to get the Magic Sac to full clone status. It's already completely superior to that disk based joke of an IBM emulator that people are paying for. Let's keep the Magic Sac going!

ABACUS meets (usually) on the first Saturday of each month at The 19TH AVENUE DINER, 1201 19th Ave., San Francisco, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Attendance is free and open to everyone. The 19TH AVENUE DINER is at the corner of 19th Ave and Lincoln (right next to Golden Gate Park). We meet on the 2nd floor. 10:00-1:00 is for 400/800/XL/XE owners. 12:00-3:00 is for ST owners. Please park on the street. DO NOT PARK IN THE DINER'S LOT. (Call 753-8483 for meeting details.)

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